

Chicago Transit Board  
January 10, 2007

Thank you Chairman Brown.

Good morning.

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To start the new year on a positive note, I am pleased to announce that our three-year renovation of the Dan Ryan branch of the Red Line is substantially complete and has come in on time and with in budget.

CTA's \$283 million investment in the Red Line's south branch largely focused on improving power reliability and the delivery of that power to trains operating 24 hours a day on the busiest line in the CTA system.

When we began the project, there were some areas on the track where insufficient power resulted in pockets where trains slowed down. Following the renovation, those areas and other slow zones on the track - totaling more than 24,000 feet - have been eliminated, helping to further improve service.

I would add that, as you know, track maintenance is an ongoing activity and new slow zones regularly crop up on the system every day. But through this project we have substantially improved the quality of service we provide on this branch.

In addition to the significant power upgrades, signal and communication systems were also improved.

Seven stations along the line, Sox-35th to 87th, received upgrades that include new flooring, enhanced lighting, refurbished platform canopies, new customer assistant kiosks and improved signs.

Ten escalators along the branch were replaced and new elevators were installed at 47th and 69th, making the stations newly accessible to customers with disabilities.

Enhancements were also made early on in the project to improve bus connectivity with the installation of curb cuts, canopies over station entrances and improved lighting on the approach to each station.

Although crews are completing some minor finishing touches at a handful of stations, including some painting that won't occur until warmer spring weather, this investment is providing customers on the South Side with more reliable and efficient rapid transit service.

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Building on that theme, we continue to move ahead on the Brown Line capacity expansion project.

This coming Friday, Kimball station will reopen for service as planned following a four-month temporary closure. As you recall, the station closed on September 15 so by opening on January 12, we are actually a few days early. Although construction work will continue for the next several months, on Friday at 4 a.m. customers will again be able to board and exit Brown Line trains at Kimball.

To update you on the project as a whole, the Kedzie and Rockwell stations reopened for service on August 16.

Work also continues at Francisco station, which, along with Kimball, temporarily closed on September 15. The Francisco station will reopen for service in March, although construction work will continue following the reopening.

Crews are also working at Montrose, Addison, Western, Chicago, Armitage and Sedgwick.

Construction is also in full swing at Belmont and Fullerton, and as part of today's agenda a report on upcoming three-track operation that will let you know how we will stage work to allow both of these stations to remain open while tracks and platforms are constructed and elevators are installed.

Since the inception of the Brown Line capacity expansion project in 1998, three-track operation has been a part of the construction plan.

The shift to three-track operation this spring in the rail corridor between Armitage and Addison will result in more crowded trains and longer commutes for customers on the Brown Line, Purple Line Express and north branch of the Red Line.

While construction is underway, trains serving the Belmont and Fullerton stations will have to share three tracks instead of four.

Although trains will continue to stop at the stations, one of the four tracks along the platforms at each station must be taken out of service while the platform and tracks are reconfigured and widened to allow room for elevators to be installed.

The specific track to be taken out of service will vary during the course of the project and prior to beginning three-track operation we will provide further information so customers will be prepared, however, the bottom line is that losing one track will increase travel times.

In total, 18 Brown Line stations from Kimball to Chicago Avenue are a part of this project. It is a huge undertaking and we appreciate the patience of our customers and neighborhood residents and businesses as we rebuild the stations while continuing to run service.

We are moving ever closer to the project's finish line and the benefits that this significant investment will provide for the surrounding community and our customers who will experience improved facilities, additional capacity on the line and improved service.

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And now, as is customary, I have an update for the Board on ridership.

In November, 41.2 million rides were provided during the month, an increase of 1.1 percent compared to November 2005. The increase is due to the continuing growth on the rail system and recent increases on the bus system.

System wide, ridership in November decreased by 0.8 percent on weekdays, Saturdays remained steady and Sundays/Holiday increased by 4.6 percent. Year-to-date, CTA has provided 456.5 million rides, an increase of 0.5 percent over last year at this time.

The bus system provided 25.2 million rides in November 2006, an increase of 0.8 percent over last year.

Weekdays were up 0.7 percent, Saturdays were down 1.8 percent, and Sundays/Holidays were up 4.1 percent.

This was the first month of year-over-year ridership growth on the bus system since March.

Growth was particularly strong on the Ashland (9/X9) and Cicero (54/X54) corridors - both corridors that received new 'X' express services, as well as on the University of Chicago routes, which also implemented service enhancements recently.

The North Lakefront express routes have been growing ridership all year and some key corridors on the South Side, for instance King Drive and Cottage

Grove, which had been decreasing through the year, had improved performance in November.

That being said, many corridors are still below last year's levels and the bus system on the year is down 1.8 percent.

The rail system provided 16 million rides in November, an increase of 3 percent over last year. Weekdays were up 2.4 percent, Saturdays were up 4.6 percent and Sundays/Holidays were up 7.7 percent.

Ridership on the rail system is up 4.9 percent on the year.

We are still finalizing 2006 totals and expect to have those figures very soon.

Based on where ridership is today and on past seasonal trends around the holidays, it is expected that 2006 will finish higher than 2005.

In the new year, we remain focused on providing service for our customers that is on time, clean, safe and friendly.

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In closing, as always, I thank the Board for supporting CTA's mission of delivering quality, affordable transit services that link people, jobs and communities.

I thank you and this concludes my report.

President's Board Report – January 2007

6

1